



COLLEGE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS AND PREFERENCES OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' TEACHING QUALITIES: A CASE STUDY IN CHINA

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ABSTRACT

Teachers' teaching qualities include four aspects: personality quality, classroom management, content, pedagogical and technical skill and knowledge and teaching professionalism. This study aimed 1) to investigate the students' perceptions of English language teachers' teaching qualities and 2) to identify the students' preferences of English language teachers' teaching qualities. The study adopted the quantitative method approach. By using Krejcie and Morgan formula for calculating the sample size, 52 students were selected from a population of 68 second-year English major college students from Shaanxi University of Chinese Medicine, in China. The questionnaire was modified from Ustunluoglu (2011) and the IOC was 0.67. The pilot test resulted in Cronbach Alpha score of 0.87. The 43-item questionnaires were filled out by 52 respondents and sent to the respondents online. The findings of the study revealed that the students' perceptions of English language teachers' teaching qualities were at the highest level in all items which broke down into 4.79/ S.D.= 0.42 for personality quality, 4.76/ S.D.= 0.46 for classroom management, 4.78/ S.D.= 0.45 for content, pedagogical and technical skills and knowledge and 4.80/ S.D.= 0.40 for teaching professionalism. It was found that the highest score was in teaching professionalism and the lowest score in classroom management. As for the students' preferences of English teachers' teaching qualities, based on the calculating of frequencies, it was found that top three with highest frequencies on the preference list consisted of 'creating an active and relaxed learning atmosphere' (45), easy-going (43), treating students equally (41)'.

Recommendations for English language teachers are that they should pay attention to be more student-centered and students' interests. Teachers are highly encouraged to employ novel and flexible teaching methods. They should be aware of the influence of their teaching qualities which comprise personal quality and teaching qualities.

Keywords: students' perceptions; student's preferences; college students; teaching qualities



1. Introduction

During the past decades, the number of English learners around the world has risen dramatically owing to globalization of economy being a principal contributor to the increase (Crystal, 2003). China has the highest number of English language learners in the whole world (Crystal, 2003; He & Li, 2018). Therefore, there is a great need for highly qualified English teachers. ‘The education plan is based on teachers’, which shows that China attaches great importance to the profession of teachers (Zhou & Jin, 2017). No matter how the world situation changes, education is an eternal topic, and teachers play the main role in this eternal topic (Lin & Liu, 2019). The modern educational concept believes that students are the main body of learning and development. According to this requirement, college English classroom teaching evaluation should also truly reflect the basic concept of modern education of ‘people-oriented’ and ‘student-oriented’, and guide teachers’ teaching work to focus on the development of students through student evaluation (Li, 2018).

This study aimed to investigate the students’ perceptions of English language teachers’ teaching qualities and identify the students’ preferences of English language teachers’ teaching qualities. This study employed a quantitative method. The quantitative research was based on a questionnaire completed by fifty-two second-year English major college student from Shaanxi University of Chinese Medicine.

Objectives of the Study

- 1) To investigate the students’ perceptions of English language teachers’ teaching qualities
- 2) To identify the students’ preferences of English language teachers’ teaching qualities.

2. Materials and methods

A quantitative research approach will be adopted using a questionnaire. Fifty-two second-year English major students (based on Krejcie and Morgan (1970) were identified as the study’s research participants. They were chosen for this study because they had been in college for two years, which made them form more comprehensive perceptions of their two groups of teachers than the freshmen.

In this study, the researcher adapted one instrument to collect important data. The questionnaire design was based on Evrim Ustunluoglu’s (2011) research and response analysis of students’ perceptions and preferences of English language teachers. For additional in-depth information, the researcher used the IOC form. The 43-item questionnaires filled out by 52 respondents. The validity score was that the IOC points in calculations provided into three scales of rating for consistency and congruencies of the items. The reliability score was from using the questionnaire with a trial group of 30 students who were not the participants of the study to fill out. The structure of the questionnaire can be presented briefly in the following table.



Table 1 Construction of Survey Questionnaire Index Dimensions

Dimension 1 st	Questionnaire
Basic Information (1-4)	Part 1 of the Questionnaire
Personality Quality (5-14)	Part 2 of the Questionnaire
Classroom Management (15-24)	
Content, Pedagogical and Technical Skill and Knowledge (25-34)	
Teaching Professionalism (35-44)	
Additional Remarks and Comments (45)	Part 3 of Open-ended Questions

3. Results

The findings of the study mainly answered all the research questions and fulfilled all research objectives. The research used descriptive analysis to get the mean value, S.D and frequencies to analyze the data of questionnaire. The quantitative data answered two research questions.

4.1 Responses to Research Question 1

What are the students' perceptions of English language teachers' teaching qualities?

The data from the questionnaire collected from 52 second-year English major students revealed that in terms of personal qualities of good English language teachers, they believe that the most important thing is whether they can get along well with their teachers (Mean=4.91; S.D.=0.29), because only based on the friendly relationship between teachers and students can students improve their learning efficiency and achieve the best results in the entire classroom. Classroom management of good English language teachers, students hope that good English language teachers can create an active and relaxed learning atmosphere in the classroom (Mean=4.92; S.D.=0.26), so that they can be happy and proactive in accepting knowledge. In terms of content, pedagogical and technical skill and knowledge of good English language teachers, students think that good English language teachers need to have sufficient knowledge of English (Mean=4.82; S.D.=0.39) in order to teach well. Concerning the teaching professionalism of good English language teachers, students think that good teachers must treat every student equally (Mean=4.90; S.D.=0.31), regardless of whether their learning is good or bad, with a positive and optimistic attitude towards their learning. This will bring a positive impact to every student in the learning process.



4.2 Responses to Research Question 2

What are the students' preferences of the teachers' qualities?

The data from the questionnaire collected from 52 second-year English major students showed that students' preferences of the teachers' quality is the personality quality. It is divided into the following aspects: easy-going, open-minded, humorous, friendly, self-confident, patient, caring, professionally dedicated and good-tempered.

All in all, good English teachers in the new era not only need to possess many good personal qualities, extensive professional knowledge, and strong learning abilities, but also should have the ability to explore and research modern educational concepts, grasp teaching laws, and have good psychological qualities and self-regulation abilities. At the same time, teachers should have noble ideological and moral character, love the education industry, and be able to analyze, predict, and guide the development of students. In addition, teachers should master the laws of education, understand the use of modern educational technology, have good classroom teaching quality, good teacher-student relationship quality, have the ability to absorb scientific information and update knowledge, and should develop in a creative direction.

For students in the study, they give the highest score to the personality quality, the second highest score to the classroom management, the third highest score to the teaching professionalism and the lowest score to the content, pedagogical and technical skills and knowledge. This means the teacher-student relationship is the most important. The details are shown in figure 1 below.

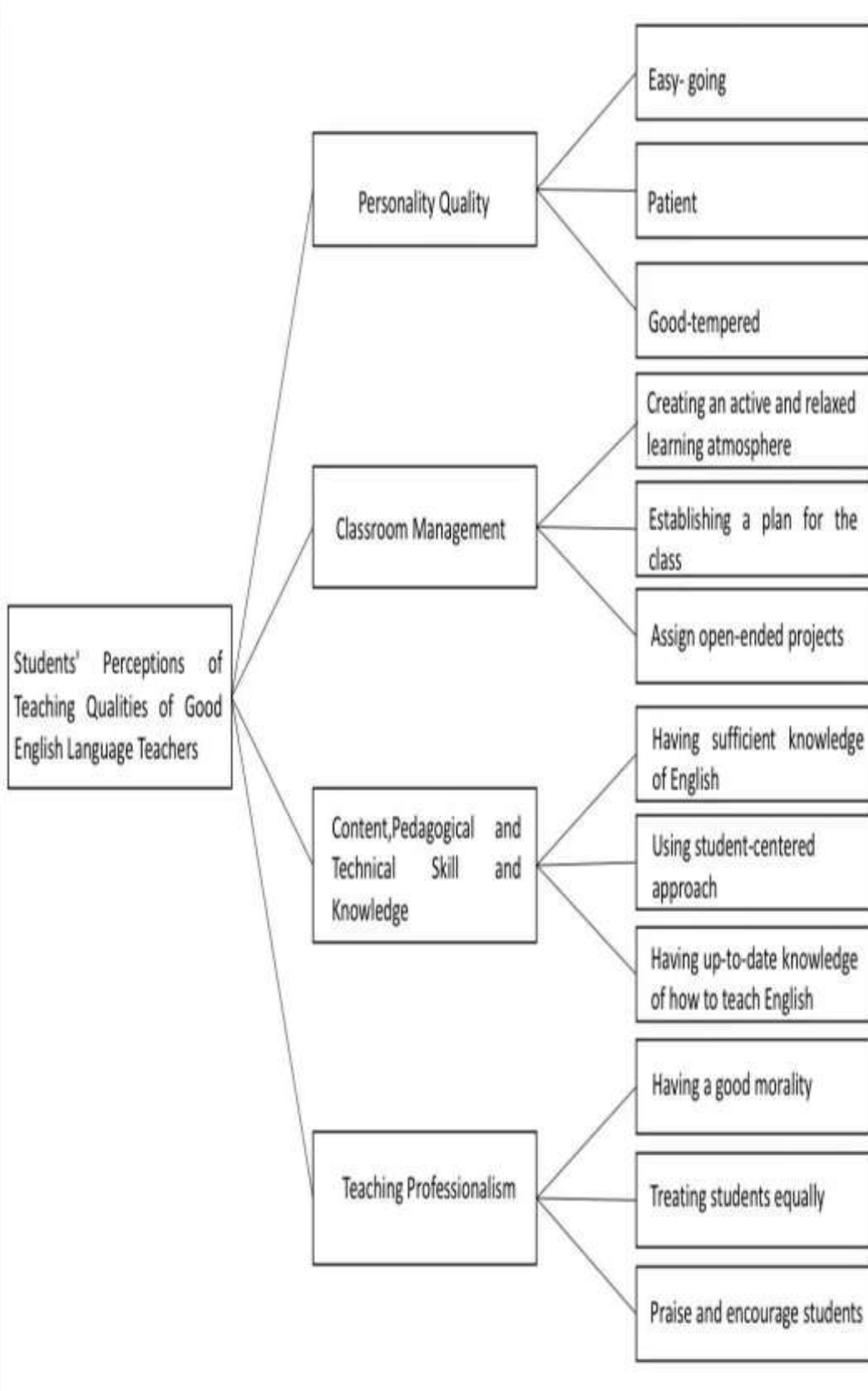


Figure 1 Students' Perceptions and Preferences of Teaching Qualities of Good English Language Teachers



5. Discussion

In this study, English major college students exhibited the highest preference in terms of the individual dimension, namely personality quality, followed by teaching professionalism, classroom management and content, pedagogical and technical skills and knowledge. The findings reveal these following issues.

First, personality quality is the most preferred quality of the English language teachers. The finding shows that good English language teachers are considered to be easy-going, humorous, enthusiastic and professional dedicated. According to Zhong (2015), Chen (2017), Liu (2019) and Pang and Zhao (2019), ‘taking teachers’ development as the first priority, good English language teachers are patient, relaxed, good-tempered, fair, helpful encouraging, kind and loving.’

In Chayanuvat (2009) the students in the study realized that the teachers have complex roles who need to be both humanistic and cognitively skilled. Teachers are supposed to be facilitators and supporters of student learning, using power over students is not recommended. In this study, Chayanuvat (2009) reports,

‘The teacher is expected to demonstrate general warm human qualities, specific personal characteristics, accommodating, presentation and performance skills, sufficient content knowledge and effective teaching strategies. The research participants look forward to positive teacher-student relationships that would eventually help them learn English with confidence, not with stress.’ (page 182)

According to the Arikan, Taser & Sarac-Suzer’s (2008) study, shows that ‘An effective teacher is a friendly, young, enthusiastic, creative and humorous person. They should be a native speaker of Turkish but fluent in English and with correct English pronunciation.’ Becoming good English language teachers, they must first possess good personal qualities because teaching students involved positive teacher-student relationship.

Along the same line, Thornberg, Forsberg, Chiriac & Bjerela (2022, p.852) explain. ‘Teacher-student relationship quality and teachers’ personal characteristics seem to be crucial in terms of students’ experiences of how teachers’ teaching methods and classroom management affect them.’

Second, students prefer the teaching professionalism, good English language teachers tend to be student-centered and treat students equally. They are capable of managing the classroom discipline and completing the teaching tasks as planned. This is similar to Lin (2008), Zhu (2012) and Ye’s (2016) studies, which shows that ‘there are three practical ways to improve that professionalism of English language teachers: first, through the reform of normal education; second, through vocational training; third, equal third, equal emphasis on cooperation and competition; fourth, by paying attention to new teachers; fifth, through the continuous deepening of lifelong education. According to the above understanding, in Hu’s report (2002),

‘The high-quality development of teacher education and teaching in the new era is reflected in the following qualities of teachers to be trained: First, teachers should always uphold the dignity of their teachers, treat themselves as a person, and not blindly cater to students; The second is to return to the essence of teaching and educating people. Teachers should not only devote themselves to imparting rich scientific and cultural knowledge to



students and developing their talents, but also become the model of students' learning by their own words and deeds, and find the right time to answer questions for students' learning and daily life; Third, teachers should fully understand the characteristics of students, teach students in accordance with their aptitude, and realize their personalized growth; Fourth, teachers' professional development should follow the process from imitation to innovation, and avoid paying too much attention to form and breaking away from the essence of education and teaching; Fifthly, teachers should cultivate a calm and steady quality to resolve the contradiction between the short-term interests of education and teaching and the long-term nature of cultivating people for a hundred years; Sixthly, teachers should have good morality, realize the unity of internal morality and external behavior, so as to promote the development of students' morality.'

Third, as for the classroom management, students agree that good English language teachers can create an active and relaxed learning atmosphere. This is similar to Tian (2006), Liu (2012), Chen (2012) and Pi's (2019) studies, which shows that 'classroom management classroom management is the process of establishing a suitable classroom environment, maintaining classroom interaction, and promoting classroom growth. Among them, establishing a suitable classroom environment is the basic premise of classroom management, maintaining classroom interaction is the measure of classroom management, and promoting classroom growth is the ultimate goal of classroom management.'

Therefore, in this study, classroom management is a series of teacher behaviors that can stimulate students to consciously participate in classroom learning and activities, and that teachers and students can jointly build a harmonious and positive classroom environment and atmosphere, reduce the occurrence of students' problem behaviors, and achieve educational goals.

Finally, in terms of content, pedagogical and technical skills and knowledge of good English language teachers, students think that good English language teachers have sufficient knowledge of English, such standard pronunciation and fluent and idiomatic utterance and familiarity with English culture. According to Xia (2010), Shi (2011), Guo and Wu (2017) and Shen (2017), 'educational knowledge is the result of the research on the process of educational activities.'

6. Conclusion

With the society and more and more experts and scholars pay attention to students' perceptions and preferences of English language teachers' teaching qualities. This study explored the four aspects of teachers' teaching qualities: personality quality, classroom management, content, pedagogical and technical skill and knowledge and teaching professionalism. The study found that the students pay more attention to teachers' personality qualities of teaching qualities.



6.1 Major findings

It is surprising that students perceive personality quality as part of the teaching qualities and all teachers should be aware that being easy-going, friendly, caring, patient and good-tempered can help students learn better.

6.2 Suggestions of the future research

Although this current study has presented some findings with students' perceptions and preferences of English language teachers' teaching qualities, there are still some limitations that need to be taken into consideration in future studies.

There are 52 English major participants, which is limited in number. All the participants, owing to the short time and small scale of this project, are only from one university in China. Therefore, this small number of subjects cannot fully reflect all college students' perceptions and preferences of English language teachers' teaching qualities. It is recommended that future studies increase the sample of the research to obtain more comprehensive and reliable data by involving more universities from different parts and at different levels.

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